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Chairman: Mr. Seixas da Costa ..... (Portugal)
later: Mr. Mbayu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Cameroon)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Howell** (International Labour Organization) said that, in addition to taking the lives of thousands of people, the terrorist outrage of 11 September 2001 would affect the already sluggish global economy. The challenge would be to avert a prolonged slowdown or, worse, a serious global recession. In his organization's view, the testing ground for the global economy was its capacity to deliver decent work for all, since work was the lens through which people viewed how the economy was faring. ILO believed that the limits of sectoral solutions to integrated global problems had been reached. The relationship between economic, environmental and social aspects of development should inspire and guide the policies and action of the system as a whole. Within such a framework, ILO was committed to promoting strategic means for reducing poverty, enhancing social integration and seeking a global economy that offered decent and productive work for all. That could be done through creating jobs, promoting rights at work, improving social protection and promoting social dialogue.

2. At the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, ILO had stressed the importance of microcredit, the informal sector, basic social services and crisis response to socio-economic shocks, among other things. It was collaborating with the multilateral system as it prepared for the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In that regard, it was especially interested in poverty eradication and improvement in working conditions, particularly in agriculture. In June of the current year, ILO had adopted the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001. The ILO 2001 World Employment Report explored the dynamics of the interaction between information technology and the world of work. In that regard, ILO sought to diminish the digital divide by encouraging employment and training and harnessing the new energies in order to make the information economy a jobs economy.

3. HIV/AIDS was a crucial workplace issue and a massive development challenge which adversely affected employment in many of the world's poorest countries. Accordingly, ILO had adopted a Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work.

4. **Mr. Nikolov** (The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) expressed the hope that during the current session the Second Committee would hold a comprehensive debate on the follow-up to the recommendations in the Millennium Declaration, especially on financing for development. The International Conference on Financing for Development should provide an opportunity to harmonize development policies and a framework for forging partnerships in mobilizing the financial resources needed for development. The participation of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization were of vital importance to the success of the Conference, which should also take into account the economic vulnerabilities of developing countries.

5. The high level of foreign indebtedness undermined developing countries' efforts to fight poverty. It was therefore urgent to develop a comprehensive approach and new initiatives to find a durable solution to the debt problem, especially for the heavily indebted poor countries. In that regard, debt cancellation should be seen not only as a fair solution but as the best investment in the elimination of poverty.

6. Tariff and non-tariff barriers must be abolished, otherwise developing countries and countries with economies in transition would never be able to benefit from trade liberalization. The process of economic integration must be managed properly in order to be beneficial. His country had undertaken a process of integration into the European Union, as illustrated by the signing, in April 2001, of the Association and Stabilization Agreement, which provided for a free trade zone with the European Union.

7. During the previous decade, his country's economy had faced serious internal and external problems which had adversely affected its development efforts. Official development assistance (ODA) or other forms of assistance could play an important role in attracting investments and domestic funding in developing countries. The United Nations system, and particularly the operational activities of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) could encourage the development of economies in transition.

8. His delegation attached great importance to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which was expected to make a special effort to help developing

countries address their problems, especially with respect to the transfer of technology and capacity-building. Because of the many obstacles that developing landlocked countries faced in international trade, especially high transport costs which made their exports expensive and less competitive, special attention should be given to the interests of those countries in the next round of trade negotiations.

9. **Mr. Swe** (Myanmar) said that relief was an integral part of comprehensive poverty eradication. His delegation was encouraged to see that the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative had already provided $25 billion in debt relief to 19 African countries. He urged the international community to take more effective measures to ensure that other eligible countries could also benefit from the Initiative and welcomed the decision of some donor countries to cancel their debt claims in the context of the Initiative. He encouraged other countries to follow suit. ODA was an important tool for development cooperation and partnership: helping the developing countries was not only a good investment for the developed countries but would prevent costly conflicts and wars. Therefore, declining ODA trends should be reversed and every effort made to meet the targets of the Millennium Declaration.

10. One of the main obstacles in the fight against poverty in the developing countries was the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which in 2000 alone had infected 5.3 billion people. HIV/AIDS had become the concern of all humanity, and unanimous support and urgent action by the international community were needed to combat it. In that regard, he welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to set up a global health fund and urged the multinational pharmaceutical industries to join with the United Nations and its member Governments to find a permanent cure to that deadly disease.

11. As the international community made preparations for the ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), it must be careful to avoid making the same mistakes that had led to the failure of the Seattle Conference. Before embarking on a new round of negotiations for further trade liberalization, it was vital to have an in-depth discussion on the built-in agenda agreed at Marrakech and a balanced agenda must be drawn up for Doha. Developed countries must show flexibility in solving the inherent imbalances in the present WTO system and must be sensitive to the legitimate concerns of developing countries. Non-trade issues, such as labour standards and environmental conditionalities, should not be put on the WTO agenda.

12. Noting that most international capital flows headed towards developed countries, he said that the International Conference on Financing for Development presented a golden opportunity to discuss wide-ranging issues affecting development. That Conference would be the test for the new constructive partnership and cooperation between the developed and developing countries as well as all stakeholders in the global economy. The World Summit on Sustainable Development would give the international community a unique opportunity to undertake a holistic and realistic assessment of the real challenges in the field of sustainable development and devise effective means to meet those challenges.

13. At the national level, Myanmar's strategy for achieving the goals of the Millennium Summit focused on accelerating of economic growth, alleviating poverty, integrating national groups in remote border areas into the mainstream economy and achieving sustainable development. Since the Government believed that promoting food security and raising the incomes of farmers would facilitate poverty alleviation, it had focused its efforts on boosting agricultural productivity and developing infrastructure. Moreover, the project for progress of border areas and national races had, inter alia, provided alternative income opportunities and health care and contributed to eradicating illicit drug production and trafficking in the border areas.

14. **Mr. Theron** (Namibia) said that the impact of the barbaric terrorist attack on the United States continued to slow down the global economy. The common goals of the international community had been underlined in the Millennium Declaration, which had called for transforming globalization into a positive force for all the world's people. Political will could and should be marshalled to create solidarity, while lofty principles must be translated into action. As the international community assessed the global economy, it should focus on addressing the imbalances in the world market to enable the poor to fend for themselves. Developing countries needed the assistance of the developed countries to redesign their own development paradigm, eradicate poverty, enhance meaningful participation through capacity and institution-building, establish a political and economic system favourable to individual

freedom, and strengthen international cooperation through partnership.

15. His delegation sincerely hoped that the International Conference on Financing for Development would be able to address in a more meaningful way the marginalization of developing countries with a view to changing the decision-making processes, adjusting the terms of trade, rescheduling the external debt and mobilizing public and private capital flows at national and international levels. The Conference should also address issues pertaining to the new international financial architecture.

16. He expressed the hope that the outcomes of the Fourth World Tourism Organization Ministerial Conference and the World Summit on Sustainable Development could provide help to developing countries in their efforts, inter alia, to feed the poor and provide shelter; halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS; provide safe drinking water; and offer employment to the millions of unemployed youth.

17. The fact that the Bretton Woods institutions were now paying particular attention to Africa's extreme poverty was a positive development. In that effort, his country was ready to work with all relevant actors to reverse declining commodity prices, settle regional conflicts and civil strife and replace misdirected structural adjustment programmes. Namibia would continue to cooperate with all major stakeholders to enhance international cooperation through partnership. As a member of the African Union, it would endeavour to rally the international community to build a viable consensus in coordinating assistance for Africa's development priorities in the context of the New African Initiative.

18. **Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas** (Bolivia) associated himself with the earlier statements made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the representative of Laos, speaking as Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

19. In an unjust and inequitable globalization process, which offered promise for some and marginalization for others, the ever-widening gap between living conditions in the developed and developing countries reflected major distortions in trade and investment, the engines of development. International trade in the developing countries' exports was scant, while the developed countries absorbed by far the most global foreign direct investment (FDI), in contrast to the drastic decline of investment in the developing countries, giving the former even more clout in the world economy.

20. Although his Government had curbed inflation, rescheduled and reduced its external debt, privatized State enterprises and created the conditions for sustained development, after nearly a decade of modest growth in per capita income, growth had brusquely decelerated owing to the international crisis environment. Despite some macroeconomic improvements, the country's slow growth rate had made it impossible to reduce poverty indicators. The structural adjustment on which Bolivia had embarked called for even greater sacrifices by the people, but hand in hand with more resolute international cooperation.

21. Current trends and recent events had sharpened the challenge of attaining the Millennium Declaration's goal of halving extreme poverty. Despite repeated calls for a change in the current international economic, trade and financial system, which did not meet the needs of the developing countries, especially those of the most vulnerable, no specific conclusions had yet been reached. It was to be hoped that the forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development would be firmer with regard to true financial development cooperation with those countries.

22. The developing countries' vulnerability in a globalizing economy called for the institution of a just and equitable process, covering various areas, which would enable them to speed up their integration in the world economy. In the political sphere, democracy needed to be strengthened through respect for political, social and cultural rights and eradication of poverty. In the economic area, the developing countries' productive capacity needed to be enhanced. In the area of finance, they needed a stable and predictable world economy, while the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) required sufficient concessional funding to boost growth and development.

23. In trade, not only should the developing countries' exports enjoy free access to the major markets in the developed world, but the latter's initiative to grant free access for all products from the least developed countries (LDCs) should be expanded to cover all HIPC countries, thus providing them with

much-needed foreign currency. In technology, the South needed assistance for more effective use and adaptation of the latest technologies in the interests of commercial competitiveness. An international policy to universalize information and knowledge was imperative.

24. In the social sphere, bridges should be built not only to improve education and train people to live together in a highly competitive world, but to ensure peaceful coexistence based on tolerance, respect and solidarity, as well as strengthening national and international institutions to ensure the changes needed for new commitments. Primary responsibility for changing the current world system remained with those with the greatest influence on it.

25. The forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development provided an opportunity to seek better balance in the progress of all countries towards sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions. The preparations should be intensified and set in the new context of economic globalization, so different from the conditions that had prevailed in Rio. With most countries' economies currently in the hands of transnationals, there must be a worldwide frame of reference for ensuring that transnational capital was used to support the developing countries' overall development.

26. In conclusion, he called on the entire international community to form a new alliance based on a vision of a fairer, more interdependent world for all.

27. **Mr. Serbini** (Brunei Darussalam), associating himself with the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 noted that the deteriorating global environment had serious repercussions on developing countries, which had no safety nets and scant savings, and that rapidly changing information and communication technologies (ICT) affected not only people's lives, but also their occupations, most of which were increasingly knowledge-based. With its many dimensions, globalization was complex and involved opportunities and challenges alike, creating disparities among regions and countries, as well as within countries, and underscoring the world's increasing interdependence. Success in that environment would depend on the capacity to acquire and use knowledge and to adapt.

28. Poverty eradication was a prerequisite of sustainable development. Although a recent UNCTAD report painted a bleak picture of world flows of foreign direct investment (FDI), trade alone could not eliminate poverty from the developing countries, which needed to boost their capacity in order to participate in interdependent economic activities. To that end, Governments needed the cooperation of all stakeholders to enable countries to benefit from ICT. In that connection, he welcomed the outcome of the recent high-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership and, in particular, the focus on ICT for developing countries, as well as the establishment of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force to help the United Nations bridge the digital divide.

29. While his Government remained committed to WTO, integration of developing countries in the world economy was essential if they were to benefit from global trade. In that context, his delegation supported efforts to strengthen such countries' capacity to meet their obligations to WTO, which must become more transparent so that all members could participate equitably.

30. It was vital that the outcome of the forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development should achieve the aims of the Millennium Summit. There too, the only means was effective dialogue among all relevant stakeholders. The forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development would provide an opportunity to identify the causes of the poor implementation of Agenda 21.

31. Economic, social and environmental considerations were equally important for sustainable development. His country pursued an active environmental protection policy set forth in its five-year National Development Plans, a central objective being Agenda 21, many of whose goals had become government policy. Lastly, his country was regionally and internationally active and was a party to various instruments concerning sustainable development.

32. **Mr. Husain** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)) said his organization followed with great interest the deliberations of the Committee, which addressed issues of critical concern to its member States. They included macroeconomic and sectoral policy, sustainable development and

international economic cooperation, environment, migration, and permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources.

33. The Chairman of the Group of 77 had attributed the world economy's unexpectedly intense slow-down to the significant decline in the growth of global output and trade, prompted by the retrenchment of the developed countries' economic activities. There was also now the risk that the terrorist attacks of 11 September could further hurt world economic growth with all that would entail for the developing countries. The Committee was the ideal forum for reflection on the necessary remedial measures.

34. To that end, he advocated examination of the root causes, as well as the symptoms, of the planet's economic and social ills, which included under-development, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, prolonged foreign occupations, debilitating conditionalities and inequitable trading patterns, all of which called for resolute national and international actions. He was gratified that many of those issues were on the Committee's agenda, as they were on those of the relevant OIC bodies. OIC would complement the Committee's deliberations with appropriate actions in the context of collective efforts to continue the journey towards peace and prosperity.

35. **Mr. Mwakawago** (United Republic of Tanzania), associating himself with the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77, noted that the current financial crisis had been sparked by retrenchment in the developed countries' economic activity and would have serious repercussions on ODA and FDI to developing countries. The international community must take urgent steps to avoid the financial collapse of those countries and reverse their increased vulnerability to globalization's many challenges.

36. With one fifth of humankind still living in abject poverty, some developing countries had become unattractive to foreign capital and were experiencing a widening of the gap between them and the rich North and of the poor-rich divide within countries. The problem called for a concerted effort by the international community, especially with regard to the fulfilment of commitments made at major conferences and summit meetings. The considerable decline in ODA from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries and in their combined GNP share of ODA notwithstanding, a few countries had met the 0.7 per cent target and it was to be hoped that many more would emulate them.

37. Since external debt servicing posed a serious challenge to many developing countries, including his own, where it accounted for one third of the government budget, he welcomed the enhancement of the HIPC Initiative and progress with debt relief, which facilitated poverty reduction. Of the 22 countries scheduled to reach the decision point by the end of 2000, only one had reached the completion point. He also welcomed the new approach linking access to concessional windows to country-led poverty-reduction strategies as set forth in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the fact that the Bretton Woods institutions and the African Development Bank had addressed the HIPC Initiative's financing requirements and established a wide scope for frontloading relief to accelerate poverty reduction. In view of evidence that conditionality was being applied very strictly after the decision point, with the ensuing delay of multilateral debt relief, he hoped that countries that had reached the decision point would be rapidly moved to the completion point on the basis of a proven commitment to reduce poverty.

38. The forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development was particularly timely for the developing countries, where resources to finance development activities had dwindled. It was to be hoped that the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development would boost commitment to the goals of sustainable development and address the new challenges that had emerged since Rio. Massive resources were required for implementing the Programme of Action for the decade 2001-2010, adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and endorsed by the General Assembly. Since its implementation was the responsibility of the LDCs themselves, whose capacity in many areas was limited, the international community had a duty to assist them in so doing. His delegation eagerly awaited the Secretary-General's report on the proposals for a follow-up mechanism for the Programme of Action.

39. The imminent triennial policy review of the operational activities of the United Nations development system should focus on thorough implementation of General Assembly Resolution

50/120 on funds and programmes. In that connection, his Government had articulated national strategic priorities for poverty reduction in both the PRSP and the Tanzania Assistance Strategy (TAS) in order to achieve the aims of its longstanding economic, social and political reform process. With enormous help from the United Nations system and other development partners, the Government had developed the TAS and PRSP, later adopted as the system's Common Country Assessment (CCA) and as the basis for the United Nations Development Framework (UNDAF). Appealing for support for all LDCs in such national endeavours, he hoped that the Committee would endorse them as the best coordinated frameworks for poverty reduction and sustainable development.

40. *Mr. Mbayu (Cameroon), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

Agenda item 95: Macroeconomic policy questions

(c) Science and technology for development

41. **Ms. Brandwayn** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) reviewed the proposals in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordinating role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (A/56/96-E/2001/87), submitted pursuant to resolution 55/185. At its recent fifth session, the Commission had focused primarily on national capacity-building in biotechnology, dealing also with international and country reports on technology and innovation policies, and reviewing its own coordinating work. It had decided that, for the period 2001-2003, its focus would be on technology development and capacity-building for competitiveness in a digital society, and had appointed three panels to address, respectively, technology transfer, diffusion and capacity-building with particular attention to absorption, and applications of information and communication technologies to enhance the competitiveness of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The panels' findings and policy recommendations would be considered by the Commission at its sixth session in 2003.

42. There was expected to be broader participation by United Nations agencies in the work of the panels. Over the past two years, the reports of previous panels had been more widely disseminated, particularly through the Internet. The Commission, and UNCTAD as its secretariat, had organized three panels on biotechnology with agency participation; and, in general, there was now a higher level of cooperation with other bodies of the United Nations system, especially the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission on the Status of Women.

43. UNCTAD had established an electronic network, the Science and Technology for Development Network (STDev) to which other United Nations agencies could contribute information on their activities. The Network's web site enhanced the Commission's coordinating role, and disseminated information on best practices in the field of technology, on science and technology activities within the United Nations system and by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and on scientific and technological developments important to developing countries. UNCTAD, as a pioneer in the use of information technologies, and the Commission, with its great experience in the field, had to interact closely with the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force; the STDev network would be useful for the purpose.

44. **Mr. Asadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that scientific knowledge and technological development were the province of a small number of countries, while the majority of nations, whose people lived in poverty, had not yet reaped the benefits. It was urgent to harness such potent weapons in the service of development worldwide. Yet the use of technology for development was receiving a rather low priority in the United Nations system. The Heads of State and Government of the developing world had expressed their concern about the technology gap, which could only increase the income gap between poor and rich countries, in the final document of the Non-Aligned Movement's South Summit in 2000. Worse yet, the technology gap itself would inevitably widen unless the United Nations played the central role in removing the different barriers faced by the South in the acquisition of knowledge and technology. The United Nations should focus on the transfer of technology to developing countries and the building of a domestic technology supply capacity.

45. The Group of 77 and China endorsed the decision of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to meet annually, and favoured the

establishment of an open-ended working group to analyse ways of enhancing the Commission's role in making recommendations and helping set United Nations policy in the field. The Commission should, further, make proposals for the transfer of technology, including the possibility for a universally applicable code of conduct for transfer on preferential terms. The Group of 77 and China also favoured a feasibility study on the establishment within the Commission of an international mechanism for research and development, especially in areas of critical importance to the developing countries, such as health and agriculture, to be carried out in the developing countries themselves, with the results remaining in the public domain.

46. UNCTAD itself, having begun to service the Commission, had to give its core programmes a strong science and technology dimension. The Science and Technology for Development Network (STDev) provided comprehensive information on science and technology activities within the United Nations system and elsewhere.

47. It was a matter of great concern that the resources available to the United Nations system to bridge the technology gap were inadequate. The Commission should certainly be strengthened as had been recommended; and consideration should also be given to launching a programme involving science and technology diplomacy.

48. The phenomenal advances in science and technology had an impact on virtually all facets of life and economic activities. Consequently, the Commission should become involved in the preparations for the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development and World Summit on the Information Society, and in implementing the Millennium Declaration. The newly established ICT Task Force should build on existing expertise within the United Nations system, particularly the Commission. Despite the good work already done by the Commission and its projected work in the coming biennium on technology development and capacity-building for competitiveness in a digital society, that body had continuously suffered from a lack of resources, and it was urgent to provide it with extrabudgetary resources. The Group of 77 and China recommended that a special trust fund should be established within UNCTAD to assist the Commission in carrying out its various mandates.

49. **Mr. Goffin** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Turkey and, in addition, Iceland, said that, in order to build a true partnership between technology and sustainable development, it was necessary to transcend the antagonism surrounding the unequal relationship often perceived between recipients and "owners" of technology. The technological dimension must thus be fully integrated into development strategies, programmes and projects, including in order to strengthen institutional capacity. It was important also to ensure that the debate was not restricted to ICT; equally revolutionary new technologies in the molecular, genetic and nanotechnological fields were likely to transform development strategies, in particular in the medical and food sectors. Moreover, a broader view must be taken of the impact of new technologies on human life, as described in the *Human Development Report 2001* ("Making New Technologies Work for Human Development").

50. Mobile communications and the Internet had enhanced participatory democracy in many countries, with email networks having been shown to be beyond the control of authoritarian Governments. Such technologies did, however, raise the highly complex problems of network security, privacy protection and cybercrime.

51. In health, new biotechnologies offered hope of resolving basic health issues and combating tropical diseases. Financial incentives for private research into diseases confined to developing countries were, however, lacking and public funding was needed.

52. Although the European Union recognized the importance of progress in genetic engineering — particularly for the creation of new crop varieties — it maintained its attachment to the precautionary principle which governed its policy on imports. To achieve food security for the world's population, a sustainable but ecologically sound new agriculture must be developed. The European Union stood ready to assist developing countries in building their capacities to that end. Some biotechnological research might also be encouraged *in situ*.

53. There was an urgent need to bridge the technological divide between rich and poor nations, in particular through poverty eradication. In order to

create the necessary enabling environment, human potential must be developed alongside physical infrastructure. Domestic measures to attract investment were also vital. Technology transfer alone was not sufficient. It was crucial also to promote individual creativity and competition, including the freedom to think and work in peace and security.

54. **Mr. Ierulescu** (Romania) said that there had been substantive developments in the area of new and innovative technologies within the United Nations system in recent years, including the establishment in 2001 of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and the Science and Technology for Development Network. The future success of those bodies would depend on coordination. In that regard, the main issue was avoiding duplication of activities, thus facilitating the sharing of information on science and technology within the United Nations system as well as with other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and building awareness of technological and scientific developments that were particularly important to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. To that end, it was essential to enhance cooperation between the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and strengthen partnership with the private sector through the companies involved with information and communication technologies.

55. His Government was developing a plan of action for enhancing cooperation with international organizations involved with information technology and science. It was also developing concrete and innovative forms of partnership between public institutions and private companies specializing in information and communication technology. Moreover, since Romania was involved in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the Government paid careful attention to the process of revamping scientific cooperation among countries of that region. In that regard, the development of the high-capacity electronic network between the European Union countries and South East Europe would ensure common access to specialized information for Romania's scientists and researchers.

56. The World Summit on the Information Society to be held in two phases in Geneva and Tunis in 2003 and 2005, respectively, would underline the role of Governments, the private sector and civil society in promoting and disseminating the benefits of information technology and bridging the digital divide.

57. Concerning the action-oriented proposals to improve interaction and coordination on science and technology activities in the United Nations, his delegation believed that the idea of establishing a trust fund for supporting the activities of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the creation of a United Nations system joint programme for science and technology could be examined further.

58. **Mr. Stanislavov** (Russian Federation) said that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development should deal with the scientific, technological, economic, commercial, ethical, social and educational aspects of "Technology development and capacity building for competitiveness in a digital society" — its new substantive theme for the period 2001-2003. It was also important to ensure that the results of the Commission's previous work on ICT were incorporated into current initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide. The Commission should, moreover, intensify its efforts to promote science and technology partnerships and networks, including between public and private sectors. It should also help developing countries and countries with economies in transition to gain access to new technologies by means of recently established science and technology networks.

59. Governments, for their part, should elaborate comprehensive policies for the development of biotechnology in accordance with their national strategies. The international community, should in turn, provide assistance for national capacity-building, including for the elaboration of relevant legal frameworks in the field of biotechnology.

60. **Mr. Niehaus** (Costa Rica), speaking also on behalf of Belize, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, observed that the revolution in science, technology and the communication of information had had an unprecedented impact on global economic and social relations. Information and knowledge were becoming increasingly accessible and were turning into major factors of production as well. A nation's wealth was measured not in natural resources but in the knowledge and talent of its citizens in the emerging society

centred on communicable ideas and creativity. Technological development was the engine for globalization, and the information and communication technologies were promoting development. Investment in the developing technologies greatly expanded the means for improving the quality of life of the world's peoples.

61. The developing countries stood to benefit enormously but it was very difficult to obtain access to the technologies, to afford them and to provide the proper training and capacity-building needed to use them properly. According to the *Human Development Report 1998*, the 29 industrialized nations had invested some $500 million in research and development, a sum higher than the total of the gross domestic products (GDPs) of the 88 poorest countries of the world. In the developing countries generally, limited infrastructure, inadequate regulatory systems, access costs and lack of human resources were serious handicaps to connectivity and the use of information and communication technologies, which were, moreover, not geared to their languages or their social and cultural contexts.

62. The new technologies must be channelled towards meeting the most urgent needs of the poorest. Policies governing technology had a direct impact on many development issues, including public health, education and job creation, and national policies had to be shored up by international initiatives. Technological progress must be made to serve development, in order to benefit populations as a whole and to act as an instrument of growth and development. That required a genuine partnership between Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

63. It was encouraging that the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development had begun to hold joint meetings, and that the Commission was taking a greater part in the discussions of the Council's subsidiary bodies; that the Commission had begun to work in the field of biotechnology, and that the Science and Technology for Development Network had been set up. The United Nations itself must be deeply involved in promoting international cooperation in ICT. Various bodies in the United Nations system were already dealing with the issue, but greater consistency and coordination in putting policies into effect would be desirable if the Organization was to assist the developing countries in a truly effective way.

64. Experience had shown that government action and high-level commitment were indispensable for creating a knowledge-based economy, and that a proper regulatory system was crucial to ensure affordable access to ICT. Infrastructural limitations could be overcome through the collective use of appropriate technologies and the establishment of infrastructural investment incentives. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development had well chosen the topic on which it would focus during the period 2001-2003. It should use the opportunity to find ways of improving coordination within the United Nations system as it implemented the Millennium Declaration, the Ministerial Declaration of the Economic and Social Council at its high-level segment in 2000 and the conclusions adopted at its coordination segment in 2001, and as it worked with the ICT Task Force and other groups in the field. The Task Force, a valuable addition, should accomplish its work as quickly as possible. More information on its structure and programme of work would be awaited with interest.

65. The public and private sector should certainly work together to facilitate the transfer and absorption of new technologies, drawing upon private-sector resources, know-how and research in the development of advanced technology. The Commission could offer technical assistance to the developing countries in formulating policies to that effect at all levels. The Commission, given greater financial and human resources, should offer more support to regional and subregional initiatives in the field. Only those nations which participated enthusiastically in the digital revolution and the new world economy would flourish.

66. **Mr. Hassan** (Pakistan) said that the recent slowdown in the developed economies was having a ripple effect on the economies of the developing countries, particularly in growth and trade, and would accentuate the problems they were already facing. In such a climate, technology remained the only hope for the future, for it would continue to serve as an engine for economic growth and development.

67. To ensure that the technological revolution benefited every inhabitant of the world, a holistic, progressive and participatory approach had to be adopted, ensuring that technology would be used for development needs and poverty eradication. A prerequisite was to create an enabling environment by removing major impediments in the areas of infrastructure, education, capacity-building, investment

and connectivity. Access to technology was the major problem faced by the developing countries, and had resulted in low productivity and competitiveness in world markets. Technology should therefore be transferred under preferential conditions to developing countries, the implementation of existing multilateral commitments in the area of technology transfer must be given priority, and incentives should be provided, as called for by WTO in its Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs Agreement).

68. The United Nations was well placed to lead the world in putting science and technology at the service of development. By building partnerships with all involved, it could lead the way in promoting the development objectives of developing countries. It was therefore particularly important to strengthen the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the United Nations focal point in the field. Pakistan supported the recommendation to establish a special trust fund for scientific and technological activities. The establishment of the ICT Task Force had also been a timely step and it should lead the way in the use of ICT to promote development for all. It had been encouraging to see the positive response of the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society to forging a partnership with the United Nations system in order to advance the global efforts to bridge the digital divide.

69. His own Government had adopted a comprehensive approach to the promotion of science and technology. A presidential commission for science and technology had been established, and the creation of an advisory body for the development of science and technology as it impinged on economic development and national security was also under consideration. An all-out effort was being made to strengthen the science base in the country and a multifaceted national information technology policy had been launched. Cognizant of the importance of South-South cooperation, Pakistan was sharing its scientific and technological expertise with other developing countries.

70. All such efforts, however, by developing countries to place themselves strategically so that they could benefit from the immense potential of science and technology were unlikely to yield the desired results without a commensurate international effort.

71. **Ms. Clarke** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that many recent advances in science and technology had gone unnoticed by the average citizen, particularly in developing countries. CARICOM countries also suffered from insufficiencies in capacity-building, the situation being further exacerbated by the debilitating "brain drain" of scientists to developed countries.

72. The action-oriented proposals of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development compared favourably with the objectives of the Caribbean Council on Science and Technology, which was responsible for implementing CARICOM policies and programmes in science and technology and promoting cooperation, coordination and rationalization of science and technology in CARICOM countries. There was indeed an urgent need to develop and strengthen the science and technology infrastructure in the subregion.

73. In the medical field, despite phenomenal advances in science and technology that provided tools for early detection and swift intervention, the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa had reached crisis proportions. The efforts of the Government of Brazil to make affordable drugs for HIV/AIDS treatment available to developing countries were most welcome in that connection. Medical practice had been transformed by advances in genetic engineering and non-invasive procedures, inter alia. It was important to ensure, however, that scientific research was undertaken in strict accordance with international agreements and that it took account of cultural sensitivities and national heritage. All efforts should also be made to ensure that consumers were privy to data on genetically modified food products.

74. CARICOM countries wished to reiterate their call for the Commission to meet with a representative of the Caribbean Council on Science and Technology to discuss avenues for cooperation. The proposals that had been advanced for coordinating efforts at the national level should allow the Commission to strengthen its assistance to developing countries for capacity-building in science and technology.

75. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that efforts should focus on strengthening the role of international bodies in enabling developing countries to enhance their capabilities and develop technologies suitable to their needs. Her Government attached great importance to

the work carried out by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in the areas of: gender, science and technology, ICT, partnership and networking for capacity-building, and capacity-building in biotechnology. The United Nations system played an important role in supporting country capacity-building in science and technology. ICT had the potential to make a difference in disseminating education opportunities and raising education levels, promoting health services and enhancing the effectiveness of public administration.

76. The development of local content was crucial, since it ensured not only wider access, but also the preservation of diverse cultural, ethnic and linguistic identities. Individuals should not merely be the recipients of foreign content, however. Improving and augmenting content in local languages was not only a matter of translation. In order to address local needs and reflect diverse economic realities, efforts should be directed towards the generation of local production. In science and technology, the usual reaction was to "look North". Allowing developing countries to develop knowledge more suitable to their environment opened the possibility for South-South cooperation in an area where developing countries faced similar challenges.

77. **Mr. Benmellouk** (Morocco) said that developing countries' efforts at bridging the digital divide were hampered by structural limitations, especially insufficient resources. Action was required at the international and regional levels if developing countries were to benefit from the experience of developed countries in that regard; the involvement of the private sector was also vital. The United Nations had a lead role to play in the coordination of multilateral activities and the identification of strategies for ensuring that ICT was harnessed for development. His delegation supported the strengthening of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, which must be given the necessary resources to enable it to carry out its mandate. The United Nations could assist developing countries by helping them to assess their needs in science and technology and by identifying partnerships between developed and developing countries, including with the private sector.

78. **Mr. Lee Kyung-Chul** (Republic of Korea) said that scientific and technological capacities were a key to economic and social advancement. The development and diffusion of new technology had opened up a wide window of opportunity for developing countries. It had also, however, presented new hurdles for those countries that were less equipped to take advantage of technological progress. Due support should thus be given to multilateral cooperation, including in biotechnology and ICT. To that end, public-private sector partnerships and collaborative efforts with academic institutions were crucial, as was enhanced coordination in the United Nations system.

79. The relatively rapid economic growth in the Republic of Korea was largely attributable to national investment in the field of science and technology. The establishment in the early stages of Korea's economic development of a government agency devoted entirely to science and technology reflected the importance accorded in the country's overall development strategy to that area. In close cooperation with the private sector and academia, the Government was currently pursuing a 14-year programme to raise its biotechnology capacity to an internationally competitive level.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.